PHIL-O-RUM'S CANOE AND MADELEINE VERCHERS

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Cover

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"O ma ole canoe, wat 's matter wit' you, an' w'y was you be so slow?"

[image]

Title page

Phil-o-rum's Canoe

and

Madeleine Vercheres

Two Poems by

William Henry Drummond

Author of "The Habitant," etc.

Illustrated by Frederick Simpson Coburn

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[image]

headpiece

PHIL-O-RUM'S CANOE.

"O ma ole canoe, wat 's matter wit' you,
an' w'y was you be so slow?
Don't I work hard enough on de paddle, an'
still you don't seem to go--
No win' at all on de fronte side, an' current
she don't be strong,
Den w'y are you lak' lazy feller, too sleepy for
move along?

"I 'member de tam, w'en you jomp de sam'
as deer wit' de wolf behin',
An' brochet on de top de water, you scare
heem mos' off hees min':
But fish don't care for you now at all, only jus'
mebbe wink de eye,
For he know it 's easy git out de way, w'en
you was a-passin' by"----

I 'm spikin' dis way, jus' de oder day, w'en I 'm

out wit' de ole canoe
Crossin' de point w'ere I see, las' fall, wan very
beeg caribou,
Wen somebody say, "Phil-o-rum, mon vieux,
wat 's matter wit' you youse'f?"
An' who do you s'pose was talkin'? W'y de
poor ole canoe shese'f.

O yass, I 'm scare w'en I 'm sittin' dere, an'
she 's callin' ma nam' dat way.
"Phil-o-rum Juneau, w'y you spik so moche,
you 're off on de head to-day:
Can't be you forget, ole feller, you an' me
we're not too young,
An' if I 'm lookin' so ole lak' you, I t'ink I
will close ma tongue.

"You should feel ashame, for you 're alway
blame, w'en it is n't ma fault at all,
For I 'm tryin' to do bes' I can for you on
summer-tam, spring, an' fall.
How offen you drown on de reever, if I 'm
not lookin' out for you
W'en you 're takin' too moche on de w'isky,
some night comin' down de Soo.

"De firse tam we go on de Wessoneau, no
feller can beat us den
For you 're purty strong man wit' de paddle,
but dat 's long ago, ma frien',
An' win' she can blow off de mountain, an'
tonder an' rain may come,
But camp see us bote on de evening--you
know dat was true, Phil-o-rum.

"An' who 's your horse, too, but your ole
canoe, an' w'en you feel cole an' wet,
Who was your house w'en I 'm upside down,
an' onder de roof you get,
Wit' rain ronnin' down ma back, Baptême! till

I 'm gettin' de rheumateez,
An' I never say not'ing at all moi-meme, but
let you do jus' you please?

"You t'ink it was right, kip me out all night
on reever side down below,
An' even 'bon soir' you was never say, but
off on de camp you go,
Leffin' your poor ole canoe behin', lyin' dere
on de groun',
Watchin' de moon on de water, an' de bat
flyin' all aroun'?

"Oh, dat's lonesome t'ing hear de grey owl
sing up on de beeg pine tree!
An' many long night she kip me awake till sun
on de Eas' I see,
An' den you come down on de morning for
start on some more voyage,
An' only t'ing decen' you do all day, is carry
me on portage.

"Dat 's way, Phil-o-rum, rheumateez she
come, wit' pain ronnin' troo' ma side,
Wan leetle hole here, 'noder beeg wan dere,
dat not'ing can never hide,
Don't do any good feex me up agen, no matter
how moche you try,
For w'en we come ole an' our work she 's
done, bote man an' canoe mus' die."

Wall, she talk dat way mebbe mos' de day till
we 're passin' some beaver dam,
An' wan de young beaver, he 's mak' hees tail
come down on de water Flam!
I never see de canoe so scare, she jomp nearly
two, t'ree feet,
I t'ink she was goin' for ronne away, an' she
shut up de mout' toute suite.

It mak' me feel queer, de strange t'ing I hear,
an' I 'm glad she don't spik no more,
But soon as we fin' ourse'f arrive over dere on
de 'noder shore
I tak' dat canoe lak' de lady, an' carry her off
wit' me,
For I 'm sorry de way I 'm treat her, an' she
know more dan me, sapree!

Yass, dat 's smart canoe, an' I know it 's true,
w'at she 's spikin' wit' me dat day,
I 'm not de young feller I use to be, w'en work
she was only play,
An' I know I was comin' closer on place w'ere
I mus' tak' care,
W'ere de mos' worse current 's de las' wan too,
de current of Dead Riviere.

You can only steer, an' if rock be near, wit'
wave dashin' all aroun',
Better mak' leetle prayer, for on Dead Riviere,
some very smart man get drown;
But if you be locky an' watch youse'f, mebbe
reever won't seem so wide,
An' firse t'ing you know you 'll ronne ashore,
safe on de 'noder side.

[image]

tailpiece

[image]

headpiece

MADELEINE VERCHERES.

I've told you many a tale, my child, of the
old heroic days,
Of Indian wars and massacre, of villages ablaze
With savage torch, from Ville Marie to the
Mission of Trois Rivieres;
But never have I told you yet of Madeleine Vercheres.

Summer had come with its blossoms, and gaily
the robin sang,
And deep in the forest arches, the axe of the
woodman rang;
Again in the waving meadows, the sun-browned
farmers met
And out on the green St. Lawrence, the fisherman
spread his net.

And so through the pleasant season, till the
days of October came
When children wrought with their parents, and
even the old and lame
With tottering frames and footsteps, their
feeble labors lent
At the gathering of the harvest le bon Dieu
himself had sent.

For news there was none of battle, from the
forts on the Richelieu
To the gates of the ancient city, where the flag
of King Louis flew;
All peaceful the skies hung over the seigneurie
of Vercheres,
Like the calm that so often cometh ere the
hurricane rends the air.

And never a thought of danger had the Seigneur,
sailing away

To join the soldiers of Carignan, where down
at Quebec they lay,
But smiled on his little daughter, the maiden
Madeleine,
And a necklet of jewels promised her, when
home he should come again.

And ever the days passed swiftly, and careless
the workmen grew,
For the months they seemed a hundred since
the last war-bugle blew.
Ah, little they dreamt on their pillows the
farmers of Vercheres,
That the wolves of the southern forest had
scented the harvest fair.

Like ravens they quickly gather, like tigers
they watch their prey.
Poor people! with hearts so happy, they sang
as they toiled away!
Till the murderous eyeballs glistened, and the
tomahawk leaped out
And the banks of the green St. Lawrence
echoed the savage shout.

[image]

Like tigers they watch their prey.

"O mother of Christ, have pity!" shrieked the
women in despair;
"This is no time for praying," cried the young
Madeleine Vercheres;
"Aux armes! aux armes! les Iroquois! quick
to your arms and guns,
Fight for your God and country, and the lives

of the innocent ones."

And she sped like a deer of the mountain, when
beagles press close behind,
And the feet that would follow after must be
swift as the prairie wind.
Alas! for the men and women and little ones
that day,
For the road it was long and weary, and the
fort it was far away.

But the fawn had outstripped the hunters, and
the palisades drew near,
And soon from the inner gateway the war-bugle
rang out clear,
Gallant and clear it sounded, with never a note
of despair--
'T was a soldier of France's challenge, from
the young Madeleine Vercheres!

"And this is my little garrison, my brothers
Louis and Paul?
With soldiers two, and a cripple? may the
Virgin pray for us all!
But we 've powder and guns in plenty, and
we 'll fight to the latest breath,
And if need be, for God and country, die a
brave soldier's death.

"Load all the carabines quickly, and whenever
you sight the foe
Fire from the upper turret and loopholes down below,
Keep up the fire, brave soldiers, though the
fight may be fierce and long,
And they 'll think our little garrison is more
than a hundred strong."

So spake the maiden Madeleine, and she roused
the Norman blood
That seemed for a moment sleeping, and sent

it like a flood
Through every heart around her, and they
fought the red Iroquois
As fought in the old-time battles the soldiers
of Carignan.

And they say the black clouds gathered, and a
tempest swept the sky,
And the roar of the thunder mingled with the
forest tiger's cry,
But still the garrison fought on, while the lightning's
jagged spear
Tore a hole in the night's dark curtain, and
showed them a foeman near.

And the sun rose up in the morning, and the
color of blood was he,
Gazing down from the heavens on the little
company
"Behold, my friends," cried the maiden,
"'t is a warning lest we forget,
Though the night saw us do our duty, our
work is not finished yet."

And six days followed each other, and feeble
her limbs became
Yet the maid never sought her pillow, and the
flash of the carabine's flame
Illumined the powder-smoked faces, aye, even
when hope seemed gone,
And she only smiled on her comrades, and told
them to fight, fight on.

And she blew a blast on the bugle, and lo!
from the forest black.
Merrily, merrily ringing, an answer came
pealing back.
Oh, pleasant and sweet it sounded, borne on
the morning air,
For it heralded fifty soldiers, with gallant De

la Monnière.

[image]

"Saluted the brave young captain."

And when he beheld the maiden, the soldier of
Carignan,
And looked on the little garrison that fought
the red Iroquois
And held their own in the battle, for six long
weary days,
He stood for a moment speechless, and marvelled
at woman's ways.

Then he beckoned the men behind him, and
steadily they advance
And with carabines uplifted the veterans of
France
Saluted the brave young Captain so timidly
standing there,
And they fired a volley in honor of Madeleine
Vercheres.

And this, my dear, is the story of the maiden
Madeleine.
God grant that we in Canada may never see
again
Such cruel wars and massacre, in waking or in
dream,
As our fathers and mothers saw, my child, in
the days of the old régime!

[image]

tailpiece

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